

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
COMMITTEE ON MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS  
APRIL 26, 2010**

ATTENDANCE: Warren Blunt, Co-Chair; Thomas McCarthy; Denese Taylor-Moye, Manuel Ayala, Carlos Silva; Susan Brannelly; Robert Walsh

OTHER Anne Kelly-Lenz, City of Bridgeport Tax Collector; Lisette Garcey, Ethics Committee Nominee; Mark Anastasi, City Attorney;  
Council Members: Marty McCarthy, Andre Baker, Angel dePara; James Halloway

Call to Order

Warren Blunt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and introduced the committee members in attendance as listed above, and stated that Mr. Thomas McCarthy would be serving as a committee member, replacing AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia, for tonight's meeting.

Agenda Item

Mr. Blunt requested a suspension of the rules to move item 34-09 to the end of the agenda, and the members were all in agreement.

**35-09** Refund of Excess Tax Payments.

Ms. Kelly-Lenz, Tax Collector, stated that the following items as included in the meeting packet were requiring refunds:

Mortgage Refund \$12,000

People's Bank, Stratford – \$20,000 (issued to Bridgeport in error.)

Ms. Taylor-Moye asked if the refunds were necessary, and Ms. Kelly-Lenz replied that the payments were made in error and there was no other option besides refunding the amounts due.

**\*\* MR. MCCARTHY MOTIONED TO APPROVE A MORTGAGE REFUND OF \$12,000 AND \$20,000 REFUND TO PEOPLE'S BANK, STRATFORD.**

**\*\* MS. TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**42-09** Appointment of Lizette Garay (D) to the Ethics Commission.

Mr. McCarthy asked if the resume was included in the meeting packet, and Mr. Silva checked the book and responded that the back-up documents were from last month, and that the appointment was tabled from last month's agenda. Ms. Brannelly asked Ms. Garay to give the committee a brief summary of her background and to include why she was interested in serving on the Ethics Committee. Ms. Garay stated that she is a single mother of three children aged 23, 22, and 16 and a few years ago Ms. Colon had asked her if she was interested in serving on a committee. She added that at that time, she was not ready, but had recently been made aware that there was a vacancy and Ms. Colon called her and asked her to apply. She stated that she is employed by Optimus Health Care Facility and also works part time for the mentally challenged, is a missionary who has travelled to Africa and Guatemala and is passionate about city services, is hard working and feels she can make a difference in helping the city live up to its standards.

Mr. Silva stated that he has known Ms. Garay for two years and met her as a volunteer with Ms. Colon at City events. He added that he feels she is a stand-up person, who is qualified for the position, has what it takes, and her credentials are a perfect for the Ethics Committee. Mr. McCarthy asked if she would be able to attend the monthly meetings and if she would have schedule issues, and Ms. Garay responded that she would be able to attend the meetings without scheduling conflicts.

Mr. Walsh asked if Ms. Garay was an employee of Optimus and if she realized that any Ethics complaints or issues involving Optimus would require her recusing herself from the committee, and she responded that she did realize that and would recuse herself from any potential conflicts.

Ms. Brannelly asked her if she had been given a sense of issues and expectations involved with serving on the Ethics Commission, and Ms. Garay replied that she was hoping that training would be provided, and she was very open to learn more about the Committee and the role required. Mr. Walsh spoke in support of Ms. Garay and said that her credentials and background provides a moral compass that are well suited for the Ethic Commission.

**\*\* MS. BRANNELLY MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE  
APPOINTMENT OF LIZETTE GARAY (D) TO THE ETHICS  
COMMISSION.**

**\*\* MS. TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**51-09** State Reimbursement of low and moderate Income Housing  
Tax.

Ms. Kelly-Lenz, stated that the Council had approved a tax abatement from the state, as detailed in the packet, and the City has one year to submit to get the amount of the application. She added that this is pretty standard, and if there was any difference or lowered, they would go back to the state and re-bill the amount. Ms. Brannelly asked what the amount was and Ms. Kelly-Lenz replied \$550,000.

**\*\* MS. BRANNELLY MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE STATE REIMBURSEMENT OF LOW AND MODERATE INCOME HOUSING TAX.**

**\*\* MS. TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **34-09**      Establishment of a City Council Standing Committee on Steel Point

Councilman Baker distributed a proposed resolution from the City Attorney's office and Mr. Blunt asked the members to take a moment to read the resolution. Mr. Baker stated that this was not intended to hinder the Steel Point project but to help move it along, and was part of his due diligence to provide his constituents with information on the project. He added that he continues to receive questions from his constituents about the reasons for the delay on the project, and he felt that since the project is so large and it encompasses the entire city, the creation of a special committee would provide the necessary overview insight and a monitoring process to follow through on the details and communications involved of the project.

Ms. Taylor-Moye stated that it should be a standard progress report as part of the current and existing committee and not a special committee, since there has yet to be a chance for a working relationship to be formed.

Mr. Walsh addressed the proposed opinion letter as written by the City Attorney and stated that the property has remained vacant and the project on hold for over fifteen years and this would not happen in the North End of Bridgeport or in the Blackrock area, only in the East End. He added that the city took the property by eminent domain, and this would never have been allowed to happen in other areas of the City. He added that simply set up a committee would meet quarterly to monitor the project on a proactive basis to make them accountable and added that more oversight must be provided. He added that by City Charter rules there are already special committees set up to weigh in on important matters such as this, where current powers are "usurped", and that according to Rule XII as mentioned in the opinion letter, it is a "catch 22" where appointment of standing committees can only be done at the commencement of the City Council year, not mid-year.

Mr. McCarthy stated that he rejects the idea that this would not happen in the North end and clarified that while he agrees with Mr. Baker's concern over providing more oversight, he completely disagrees with the proposal to form a Special Committee. He added that the ECD already exists and they could put a resolution to demand information and timely reporting of updates and information. He recommends to reject this resolution to form a special committee and deems it unnecessary and is the wrong move on behalf of the City. He restated that he strongly wants the project to move forward without a committee resolution, but merely adding it as a standing item on the regular monthly agenda.

Ms. Brannelly stated that she agrees with Mr. McCarthy to keep the project moving forward without a special committee formation, but merely adding it as a standing item on the regular monthly agenda. She stated that to put a committee for a single project creates the potential for multiple committees, and added that it should be the whole City Council monitoring the progress of the project, not neighborhoods, and they should make all council members responsible. She added that she disagrees with points that ECD is too busy with CBDG grants, as that task is over, and that on point number one that a mid-year committee cannot be added is just wrong.

Mr. dePara stated that relative to the points that ECD is too busy with CBDG grants, that task is over, and they have plenty of time to focus on Steel Point. He added that Mr. Baker never voiced any comments over his concerns with Steel Point, and he was never approached on the need for a committee and feels that he was blind-sided with this resolution. He stated that he takes offense at the manner in which this was done, and added that there was a Land Use Construction Review study on the infrastructure and traffic patterns at a meeting a few months ago, and nothing was mentioned that there was a need for more oversight. He added that they operate in a vacuum and was never approached for a further status report or to make this a regular item on the agenda. He added that he grew up in that area, and he wants the project to move ahead more than anyone, as he is anxious to bring the life back into that area.

Mr. Holloway stated that having special committees is nothing new and it has been done for other City projects and has worked well for projects such as the Dog Track, and Golf Course and can attest that this is necessary to move projects along, adding that Steel Point is going nowhere for a long time.

Mr. Anastasi stated that he wanted a point of clarification that his opinion letter called for a "Special Committee" to be formed and not a "Standing Committee."

Mr. Baker asked to make a rebuttal comment in reply to Mr. dePara's comments, and stated that he felt that Mr. dePara was making valid points but was taking the request for a special committee resolution personally and it has been blown out of proportion.

He added that in his time serving on the Council he has been knocking on doors and has been asked to be accountable for projects by his district constituents, especially where homes were taken away and residents had been displaced. He added that he believes in the system and the overview role should come under the ECD, but added that there is nothing wrong with forming a committee to focus attention on the project, that it never hurts to put something in place and take it away if it is not necessary, and it is not the intention to give up power, there is no harm to meet and review projects. He added that regarding Ms. Taylor Moye's Education and Social Services Committee, it was allowed to have a special committee to review the Gibson Report, and that is an example of having a group to oversee something where accountability is required. He concluded that he is also open for short term alternative ideas.

Mr. Silva asked what would a Special Committee do more than the ECD could already do, as established, and stated that he agrees with the need for reporting, but agrees with Mr. McCarthy that to duplicate the process. He added that they currently have difficulty getting enough attendance at regular meetings, and that being the case, it would be even more difficult to field a quorum for special committees.

Mr. Baker stated that this would not duplicate efforts but would focus and delve further into issues and provide knowledge and greater detail where it is important to provide answers for the public. He added that it is a way to be accountable and to perform the due diligence as required by the Council members.

Ms. Taylor-Moye added that she fully understands about serving the constituents, but that a committee already exists, and why have two groups doing the same things, which is playing a "separate-ism game".

Ms. Brannelly stated that in response to "whose neighborhood" is suffering, she cannot believe that this has been an empty lot for 29 years, and she remembers her father being involved on the issue and it has been 29 years since her father passed away. She asked to go back to Mr. Silva's question and ask how is having a Special Committee different—what can they do that the current committee cannot. She added that since all members of the Council are not voting members of special committees, the City is not fully represented with a Special Committee. She added that Steel Point should be brought to the ECD Committee to be held accountable for the progress rather than be brought in to a Special Committee, it should be a continuum effort.

Mr. Holloway stated that the Steel Point project is not in his District 137, but maybe it will be after the census numbers are in, but regardless, without a special committee, it will go nowhere. He added that the two projects where there was no special committee, the Dog Track and the Arena at Harbor Yard have lost money without a hands-on involvement of a special committee. He added that

the Council President can put in a special committee to are care of special needs when situations like this development require special attention.

Mr. dePara stated that he wanted to ask Mr. Baker if he felt so strongly, why not approach the co-chairs, especially in the last three to four months, when he was never approached once.

Mr. Baker responded that as was the case with the Education committee, Mr. dePara should not take it personally, but there are times when a committee may be caught in a loop of a long term problem and that added focus is required, maybe not now but in two years when the effort is needed to put into place. He added that it just does not hinder when an effort is made to be proactive rather than reactive.

Mr. Walsh added that the purpose is of a standing committee is to provide greater expertise, where ECD does have the big picture but when there are two to three projects, it is better to have them focus on nuts and bolts. He added that they should be familiar with the RFP process, then when in the implementation phase it can be sunset after two years, unless the Council decides to keep it on. He added that the area looks horrible and has been that way for a long time and they need to make a change and this was a time for a new mandate.

Mr. dePara stated that he understands the angst that everyone has but it still does not justify the avenue that was taken to form a special committee, and he does take it personally. He added that he has always tried to be helpful and he would have gladly added it as a regular agenda item, but to start something and pass it off to another committee is not productive and it should be kept in the same committee.

Ms. Taylor-Moye added that each and all have been helpful but it should be stated that it was not personal, and she understands that they are trying to put in an element that could work to supersede and improve the outcome. She added that she understands that they just want to fix Steel Point, and restated that she fully understands about serving the constituents, but that a committee already exists, and why have two groups doing the same things.

Ms. Brannelly asked if the chair would entertain a motion or perhaps an amended resolution and Mr. Baker said he was not in a position to modify the resolution at this point.

**\*\* MS. BRANNELLY MOTIONED TO DENY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CITY COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON STEEL POINT.**

**\*\* MS. TAYLOR-MOYE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE VOTES IN FAVOR AND ONE OPPOSED (WALSH) AND NO ABSTENTIONS.**

Mr. Baker stated that he will work on the wording of another resolution for next month's meeting to add this issue to become part of the standing agenda with the current committee.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. SILVA MOTIONED TO ADJOURN.**  
**\*\* MS. BRANNELLY SECONDED.**  
**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox  
Telesco Secretarial Services